

BEVERLY OF GRAUSTARK

By JENNIE BARR M'UTCHEON,
Author of "Graustark"

Copyright 1914, by Jennie Barr M'UTCHEON and Company

"Father says the 'Graustark' papers are full of awful war scares from the Balkans. Are we part of the Balkans?" asked Beverly. "He says I'm no more right off home. Says he'll not pay a nickel ransom if the brigands catch me, as they did Miss Stone and that woman who had the baby. He says another he worried half to death. I'm just going to cable him that it's all off, because he says if war breaks out he's going to send my brother Dan over there to get me. I'm having Aunt Josephine send him this cablegram from St. Petersburg: 'They never fight in Balkans. Just scare each other. Skip headlines, father dear. Will be home soon, Beverly.' How does that sound? It will cost a lot, but he brought it upon his own head. And we're not in the Balkans, anyway. Aunt Joe will have a fit. Please call an A. D. T. boy, princess. I want to send this message to St. Petersburg."

When Candace entered the princess' boudoir half an hour later she was far from being the timid youth who first came to the notice of the Graustark cabinet. She was now attired in one of Beverly's gowns, and it was most becoming to her. Her short, curly brown hair was done up properly; her pink and white complexion was as clear as cream, now that the dust of the road was gone; her dark eyes were glowing with the wonder and interest of nineteen years, and she was, all in all, a most enticing bit of femininity.

"You are much more of a princess now than when I first saw you," smiled Yette, drawing her down upon the cushions of the window seat beside her.

"But she was such a pretty boy," protested Dagmar. "You don't know how attractive you were in those!"

Candace blushed. "Oh, they were awful, but they were comfortable. One has to wear trousers if one intends to be a vagabond. I wore them for more than a week."

"You shall tell us all about it," said Yette, holding the girl's hand in hers. "It must have been a most interesting week for you."

"Oh, there is not much to tell, your highness," said Candace, suddenly reticent and shy. "My stepbrother—oh, how I hate him!—had condemned me to die because he thought I was helping Danton. And I was helping him, too, all that I could. Old Bappo, master of the stables, who has loved me for a hundred years, he says, helped me to escape from the palace at night. They were to have seized me the next morning. Bappo had been master of the stables for more than forty years. Dear old Bappo! He procured the boy's clothing for me, and his two sons, armed me to the teeth, where I soon found my brother and his men. We saw your scouts and talked to them a day or two after I became a member of the band. Bappo's boys are with the band now. But my brother Danton shall tell you of that. I was so frightened I could not tell what was going on. I have lived in the open air for a week, but I love it. Danton's friends are all heroes. You will love them. Yesterday old Franz brought a message into the castle grounds. It told Captain Baldos of the plan to seize Gabriel, who was in the hills near your city. Didn't you know of that? Oh, we knew it two days ago! Baldos knew it yesterday. He met us at 4 o'clock this morning—that is, part of us. I was sent on with Franz so that I should not see bloodshed if it came to the worst. We were near the city gates, and Baldos came straight to us. Isn't it funny that you never knew all these things? Then at daybreak Baldos insisted on bringing me here to await the news from the pass. It was safer, and, besides, he said he had another object in coming back at once."

Beverly flushed warmly. The three women were crowding about the narrator, eagerly drinking in her naive story.

"We came in through one of the big gates and not through the underground passage. That was a fib," said Candace, looking from one to the other with a perfectly delicious twinkle in her eye. The conspirators gulped and smiled guiltily. "Baldos says there is a very mean old man here who is tormenting the fairy princess—not the real princess, you know. He came back to protect her, which was very brave of him, I am sure. Where is my brother?" she asked, suddenly anxious.

"He is with friends. Don't be alarmed, dear," said Yette.

"He is changing clothes, too? He needs clothes worse than I needed these. Does he say positively that Gabriel has been captured?"

"Yes. Did you not know of it?"

"I was sure it would happen. You know I was not with them in the pass."

Yette was reflecting, a soft smile in her eyes.

"I was thinking of the time when I wore men's clothes," she said. "Unlike mine, mine were most uncomfortable. It was when I aided Mr. Lorry in escaping from the Tower. I wore a guard's uniform and rode miles with him in a dark carriage before he discovered the truth." She blushed at the remembrance of that trying hour.

"And I wore boy's clothes at a girl's party once—my brother Dan's," said Beverly. "The hostess' brothers came home unexpectedly, and I had to sit behind a bookcase for an hour. I didn't see much fun in boy's clothes."

"You ought to wear them for a week," said Candace, wise in experience. "They are not so bad when you become accustomed to them—that is, if they're strong and not so tight that they're."

"You all love Baldos, don't you?" interrupted Yette. It was with difficulty that the listeners suppressed their smiles.

"Better than any one else. He is our idol. Oh, your highness, if what he says is true that old man must be a fiend. Baldos a spy! Why, he has not slept day or night for fear that we would not capture Gabriel so that he might be cleared of the charge without appealing to—to my brother. He has always been loyal to you," the girl said with eager eloquence.

"I know, dear, and I have known all along. He will be honorably acquitted. Count Marlaux was overzealous. He has not been wholly wrong, I must say in justice to him!"

"How can you uphold him, Yette, after what he has said about me?" cried Beverly with blazing eyes.

"Beverly, Beverly, you know I don't mean that. He has been a cowardly villain so far as you are concerned, and he shall be punished, never fear. I cannot condone that one amazing piece of wickedness on his part."

"You, then, are the girl Baldos talks so much about?" cried Candace eagerly. "You are Miss Calhoun, the fairy princess? I am so glad to know you."

The young princess clasped Beverly's hand and looked into her eyes with admiration and approval. Beverly could have crashed her in her arms.

The sounds of shouting came up to the windows from below. Outside, men were rushing to and fro, and there were signs of mighty demonstrations at the gates.

"The people have heard of the capture," said Candace, as calmly as though she were asking one to have a cup of tea.

There was a pounding at the boudoir door. It flew open unceremoniously and in rushed Lorry, followed by Anguish. In the hallway beyond a group of noblemen conversed excitedly with the women of the castle.

"The report from the dungeons, Yette," cried Lorry joyously. "The warden says that Gabriel is in his cell again! Here's to Prince Danton!"

Ravone was standing in the door. Candace ran over and leaped into his arms.

CHAPTER XXIX.

RAVONE was handsome in his borrowed clothes. He was now the clean, immaculate gentleman instead of the wretched vagabond of the hills. Even Beverly was surprised at the change in him. His erstwhile sad and melancholy face was flushed and bright with happiness. The kiss he bestowed upon the delighted Candace was tender in the extreme. Then, putting her aside, he strode over and gallantly kissed the hand of Graustark's princess, beaming an ecstatic smile upon the merry Beverly an instant later.

"Welcome, Prince Danton," said Yette. "A thousand times welcome."

"All Graustark is your throne, most glorious Yette. That is why I have asked to be presented here and not in the royal hall below," said Ravone.

"You will wait here with us, then, to hear the good news from our warden," said the princess. "Send the courier to me," she commanded. "Such sweet news should be received in the place which is dearest to me in all Graustark."

The ministers and the lords and ladies of the castle were assembled in the room when Baron Dangloss appeared with the courier from the prison. Count Marlaux was missing. He was on his way to the fortress, a crushed, furious, impatient old man. In his quarters he was to sit and wait for the blow that he knew could not be averted. In fear and despair, hiding his pain and his shame, he was racking his brain for means to lessen the force of that blow. He could withdraw the charges against Baldos, but he could not soften the words he had said and written of Beverly Calhoun. He was not troubling himself with fear because of the adventures in the chapel and passage. He knew too well how Yette could punish when her heart was bitter against an evildoer. Graustark honored and protected its women.

The warden of the dungeons from which Gabriel had escaped months before reported to the princess that the prisoner was again in custody. Briefly he related that a party of men led by Prince Danton had appeared early that day, bringing the fugitive prince uninjured, but crazed by rage and disappointment. They had tricked him

into following them through the pass. Intent upon slaying his brother Danton. There could be no mistake as to Gabriel's identity. In conclusion the warden implored her highness to send troops up to guard the prison in the mountain side. He feared an attack in force by Gabriel's army.

"Your highness," said Lorry. "I have sent instructions to Colonel Brize, requiring him to take a large force of men into the pass to guard the prison. Gabriel shall not escape again, though all Dawsbergen comes after him."

"You have but little to fear from Dawsbergen," said Ravone, who was seated near the princess. Candace at his side. "Messages have been brought to me from the leading nobles of Dawsbergen assuring me that the populace is secretly eager for the old reign to be resumed. Only the desperate fear of Gabriel and a few of his bloody, but loyal advisers holds them in check. Believe me, Dawsbergen's efforts to release Gabriel will be perfunctory and half hearted in the extreme. He ruled like a madman. It was his intense, implacable desire to kill his brother that led to his undoing. Will it be strange, your highness, if Dawsbergen welcomes the return of Danton in his stead?"

"The story! The story of his capture! Tell me the story," came eagerly from those assembled. Ravone leaned back languidly, his face tired and drawn once more, as if the mere recalling of the hardships past was hard to bear.

"First, your highness, may I advise you and your cabinet to send another ultimatum to the people of Dawsbergen?" he asked. "This time say to them that you hold two Dawsbergen princes in your hand. One cannot and will not be restored to them. The other will be released on demand. Let the embassy be directed to meet the Duke of Matz, the premier. He is now with the army, not far from your frontier. May it please your highness, I have myself taken the liberty of dispatching three trusted followers with the news of Gabriel's capture. The two Bappos and Carl Vandos are speeding to the frontier. Your embassy will find the Duke of Matz in possession of all the facts."

"The Duke of Matz, I am reliably informed, some day is to be father-in-law to Dawsbergen," smilingly said Yette. "I shall not wonder if he responds most favorably to an ultimatum."

Ravone and Candace exchanged glances of amusement, the latter breaking into a deplorable little gurgle of laughter.

"I beg to inform you that the duke's daughter has disdained the offer from the crown," said Ravone. "She has married Lieutenant Alano of the royal artillery and is as happy as a butterfly. Captain Baldos could have told you how the wayward young woman defied her father and laughed at the beggar prince."

"Captain Baldos is an exceedingly discreet person," Beverly volunteered. "He has told no tales out of school."

"I am reminded of the fact that you gave your purse into my keeping one memorable day—the day when we parted from our best friends at Gannock's gates. I thought you were a princess, and you did not know that I understood English. That was a sore hour for us. Baldos was our life, the heart of our enterprise. Gabriel hates him as he hates his own brother. Steadfastly has Baldos refused to join us in the plot to seize Prince Gabriel. He once took an oath to kill him on sight, and I was so opposed to this that he had to be left out of the final adventures."

"Please tell us how you succeeded in capturing that—your half brother," cried Beverly, forgetting that it was another's place to make the request. The audience drew near, eagerly attentive.

"At another time I shall rejoice in telling the story in detail. For the present let me ask you to be satisfied with the statement that we tricked him by means of letters into the insane hope that he could capture and slay his half brother. Captain Baldos suggested the plan. Had he been arrested yesterday I feel it would have failed. Gabriel was and is insane. We led him a chase through the Graustark hills until the time was ripe for the final act. His small band of followers fled at our sudden attack, and he was taken almost without a struggle not ten miles from the city of Edelweiss. In his mad ravings we learned that his chief desire was to kill his brother and sister and after that to carry out the plan that has long been in his mind. He was coming to Edelweiss for the sole purpose of entering the castle by the underground passage, with murder in his heart. Gabriel was coming to kill the Princess Yette and Mr. Lorry. He has never forgotten the love he bore for the princess nor the hatred he owes his rival. It was the duty of Captain Baldos to see that he did not enter the passage in the event that he eluded us in the hills."

Later in the day the Princess Yette received from the gaunt, hawkish old man in the fortress a signed statement withdrawing his charges against Baldos, the guard. Marlaux did not ask for leniency. It was not in him to plead. If the humble withdrawal of charges against Baldos could mitigate the punishment he knew Yette would

impose, all well and good. If it went for naught, he was prepared for the worst. Down there in his quarters, with wine before him, he sat and waited for the end. He knew that there was but one fate for the man, great or



Beverly knew that it was a faded rose small, who attacked a woman in Graustark. His only hope was that the princess might make an exception in the case of one who had been the head of the army, but the hope was too small to cherish.

Baldos walked forth a free man, the plaudits of the people in his ears. Baron Dangloss and Colonel Quinnox were beside the tall guard as he came forward to receive the commendations and apologies of Graustark's ruler and the warm promises of reward from the man he served.

He knelt before the two rulers who were holding court on the veranda. The cheers of nobles, the shouts of soldiery, the exclamations of the ladies, did not turn his confident head. He was the born knight. The look of triumph that he bestowed upon Beverly Calhoun, who lounged gracefully beside the stone balustrade, brought the red flying to her cheeks. He took something from his breast and held it gallantly to his lips before all the assembled courtiers. Beverly knew that it was a faded rose!

CHAPTER XXX.

THAT next morning a royal messenger came to Count Marlaux. He bore two sealed letters from the princess. One briefly informed him that General Brize was his successor as commander in chief of the army of Graustark. He hesitated long before opening the other. It was equally brief and to the point. The Iron Count's teeth came together with a savage snap as he read the signature of the princess at the end. There was no recourse. She had struck for Beverly Calhoun. He looked at his watch. It was 11 o'clock. The edict gave him twenty-four hours from the noon of that day. The gray old Ilstine dispatched a messenger for his man of affairs, a lawyer of high standing in Edelweiss. Together they consulted until midnight. Shortly after daybreak the morning following Count Marlaux was in the train for Vienna, never to set foot on Graustark's soil again. He was banished and his estates confiscated by the government.

The ministry in Edelweiss was not slow to reopen negotiations with Dawsbergen. A proclamation was sent to the prime minister setting forth the new order of affairs and suggesting the instant suspension of hostilities and the restoration of Prince Danton. Accompanying this proclamation went a disfigured message from Danton informing his people that he awaited their commands. He was ready to resume the throne that had been so desecrated. It would be his joy to restore Dawsbergen to its once peaceful and prosperous condition. In the meantime the Duke of Matz dispatched the news to the Princess Volga of Aphlain, who was forced to abandon—temporarily at least—her desperate designs upon Graustark. The capture of Gabriel put an end to her transparent plans.

"But she is bound to break out against us sooner or later and on the slightest provocation," said Yette.

"I dare say that a friendly alliance between Graustark and Dawsbergen will prove sufficient to check any ambitions she may have along that line," said Ravone significantly. "They are very near to each other now, your highness. Friends should stand together."

Beverly Calhoun was in suspense. Baldos had been sent off to the frontier by Prince Danton, carrying the message which could be trusted to no other. He accompanied the Graustark ambassadors of peace as Danton's special agent. He went in the nighttime, and Beverly did not see him. The week which followed his departure was the longest she ever spent. She was troubled in her heart for fear that he might not return. Despite the declaration she had made to him in one hysterical moment. It was difficult for her to keep up the show of cheerfulness that was expected of her. Reticence became her strongest characteristic. She persistently refused to be drawn into a discussion of her relations with the absent one. Yette was plucked by her manner at first, but wisely saw through the mask as time went on. She and Prince Danton had many quiet and interesting chats concerning Beverly and the erstwhile guard. The prince took Lorry and the princess into his confidence. He told them all there was to tell about his dashing friend and companion.

Beverly and the young Princess Candace became fast and loving friends. The young girl's worship of her brother was beautiful to behold. She huddled close to him on every occasion, and her dark eyes bespoke adoration whenever his name was mentioned in her presence.

"If he doesn't come back pretty soon I'll pack up and start for home," Beverly said to herself resentfully one day. "Then if he wants to see me he'll have to come all the way to Washington, and I'm not sure that he can do it, either. He's too disgustingly poor."

"What's become of that Misteh Baldos, Miss Beverly?" asked Aunt Fanny in the midst of these sorry cogitations. "Has he tucked his tail to desert us for good? Seems to me he'd oughtn't!"

"Now, that will do, Aunt Fanny," reprimanded her mistress sternly. "You are not supposed to know anything about affairs of state, so don't ask."

At last she no longer could curb her impatience and anxiety. She deliberately sought information from Prince Danton. They were strolling in the park on the seventh day of her inquisition.

"Have you heard from Paul Baldos?" she asked, bravely plunging into deep water.

"He is expected here tomorrow or the next day, Miss Calhoun. I am almost as eager to see him as you are," he replied, with a very pointed smile.

"Almost? Well, yes, I'll confess that I am eager to see him. I never knew I could long for any one as much as I—Oh, well, there's no use hiding it from you. I couldn't if I tried. I care very much for him. You don't think it sounds silly for me to say such a thing, do you? I've thought a great deal of him ever since the night at the Inn of the Hawk and Raven. In my imagination I have tried to strip you of your princely robes to place them upon him, but he is only Baldos in spite of it all. He knows that I care for him, and I know that he cares for me. Perhaps he has told you."

"Yes, he has confessed that he loves you, Miss Calhoun, and he laments the fact that his love seems hopeless. Paul wonders in his heart if it would be right in him to ask you to give up all you have of wealth and pleasure to share a humble lot with him."

"I love him. Isn't that enough? There is no wealth so great as that. But," and she pursed her mouth in pathetic despair, "don't you think that you can make a noble or something of him and give him a station in life worthy of his ambitions? He has done so much for you, you know."

"I have nothing that I can give to him, he says. Paul Baldos asks only that he may be my champion in all these negotiations are on end. Then he desires to be free to serve whom he will. All that I can do is to let him have his way. He is a free lance, and he asks no favors, no help."

"Well, I think he's perfectly ridiculous about it, don't you? And yet that is the very thing I like in him. I am only wondering how we—I mean, how he is going to live, that's all."

"If I am correctly informed he still has several months to serve in the service for which he enlisted. You alone, I believe, have the power to discharge him before his term expires," said he meaningly.

That night Baldos returned to Edelweiss, ahead of the Graustark delegation which was coming the next day with representatives from Dawsbergen. He brought the most glorious news from the frontier. The Duke of Matz and the leading dignitaries had heard of Gabriel's capture, both through the Bappo boys and through a few of his henchmen who had staggered into camp after the disaster. The news threw the Dawsbergen diplomats into a deplorable state of uncertainty. Even the men high in authority, while not especially depressed over the fall of their sovereign, were in doubt as to what would be the next move in their series of tragedies. Almost to a man they regretted the folly which had drawn them into the net with Gabriel. Baldos reported that the Duke of Matz and a dozen of the most distinguished men in Dawsbergen were on their way to Edelweiss to complete arrangements for peace and to lay their renunciation of Gabriel before Danton in a neutral court.

The people of Dawsbergen had been clamoring long for Danton's restoration, and Baldos was commissioned to say that his return would be the signal for great rejoicing. He was closeted until after midnight with Danton and his sister, Lorry and Princess Yette

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Fruit Crop Not Hurt

Atlanta, March 24.—Reports received from different sections of the state agree that there was no injury to the fruit crop from the cold snap. The reports are encouraging.